

Dreams in Buddhism and Jainism-The Advent of the Holy Persons--- Dr Uday Dokras



Queen Maya's Dream, Sanchi Stupa// Dream of Queen Maya. Kushan Period, 2nd-3rd centuries, Gandharan Region; Buddhism Sculpture Gallery, Aurora Museum, Pudong, Shanghai.

Queen Maya's Dream is the imagery of Queen Maya, mother of the Buddha, asleep on her side having a dream. It is the second most recurring figure of Queen Maya after the birth scene of the Buddha. Representation of the incident is seen in several Buddhist sites like Bahrut, Sarnath, Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, Ajanta, Gandhara sites, and sites in Central, South-East and East Asia. It is the first scene in the sequence of images telling the story of the birth of the Buddha.

The story of the dream is recorded in several historic texts like Lalitavistara, the Abiniskramana sutra, the Buddhacarita, the Mahavastu and the Mūlasarvastivada Vinaya. One of the text says, "A summer festival was organised in the city of Kapilasvastu for seven days before the full moon, Mahāmayā had taken part in the festivities. On the seventh day she woke-up early, bathed in scented water, and distributed alms, wore splendid clothes and ate pure food followed by performing the vows of the holy day. After the ritual, she went to her bed chamber, fell asleep and saw the following dream." The four guardians of the world lifted her on her couch and carried her to the Himalaya mountains and placed her under a great sal tree Then their queens bathed her ... dressed her in heavenly garments, anointed her with perfumes and put garlands of heavenly flowers on her. ... They laid her on a heavenly couch, with its head towards the east. The Bodhisattva, wandering as a superb white elephant ... approached her from the north. Holding a white lotus flower in his trunk, he circumambulated her three times. Then he gently struck her right side, and entered her womb." (*Dakkhīlapassam tlewa kucchim pauitthasadiṣo*)



Title: The Dream of Queen Maya (the Buddha's Conception)

Period: Kushan period

Date: ca. 2nd century

Culture: Pakistan (ancient region of Gandhara)

Medium: Schist

Dimensions: H. 6 1/2 in. (16.5 cm); W. 7 5/8 in. (19.4 cm); D. 1 7/8 in. (4.8 cm)

Classification: Sculpture

DREAMS

A **dream** is a succession of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep. Humans spend about two hours dreaming per night, and each dream lasts around 5 to 20 minutes, although the dreamer may perceive the dream as being much longer than this.

The content and function of dreams have been topics of scientific, philosophical and religious interest throughout recorded history. Dream interpretation, practiced by the Babylonians in the third millennium BCE^[4] and even earlier by the ancient Sumerians, figures prominently in religious texts in several traditions, and has played a lead role in psychotherapy. The scientific study of dreams is called oneirology. Most modern dream study focuses on the neurophysiology of dreams and on proposing and testing hypotheses regarding dream function. It is not known where in the brain dreams originate, if there is a single origin for dreams or if multiple regions of the brain are involved, or what the purpose of dreaming is for the body or mind.

The human dream experience and what to make of it has undergone sizable shifts over the course of history. Long ago, according to writings from Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt, dreams dictated post-dream behaviors to an extent that was sharply reduced in later millennia. These ancient writings about dreams highlight visitation dreams, where a dream figure, usually a deity or a prominent forebear, commands the dreamer to take specific actions, and which may predict future events. Framing the dream experience varies across cultures as well as through time.

Dreams figure prominently in major world religions. The dream experience for early humans, according to one interpretation, gave rise to the notion of a human "soul,"^[54] a central element in much religious thought. J. W. Dunne wrote:

But there can be no reasonable doubt that the idea of a soul must have first arisen in the mind of primitive man as a result of observation of his dreams. Ignorant as he was, he could have come to no other conclusion but that, in dreams, he left his sleeping body in one universe and went wandering off into another. It is considered that, but for that savage, the idea of such a thing as a 'soul' would never have even occurred to mankind....^[55]

Hindu

In the Mandukya Upanishad, part of the Veda scriptures of Indian Hinduism, a dream is one of three states that the soul experiences during its lifetime, the other two states being the waking state and the sleep state.^[56] The earliest Upanishads, written before 300 BCE, emphasize two meanings of dreams. The first says that dreams are merely expressions of inner desires. The second is the belief of the soul leaving the body and being guided until awakened.

In Judaism, dreams are considered part of the experience of the world that can be interpreted and from which lessons can be garnered. It is discussed in the Talmud, Tractate Berachot 55-60.

The ancient Hebrews connected their dreams heavily with their religion, though the Hebrews were monotheistic and believed that dreams were the voice of one God alone. Hebrews also differentiated between good dreams (from God) and bad dreams (from evil spirits). The Hebrews, like many other ancient cultures, incubated dreams in order to receive a divine revelation. For example, the Hebrew prophet Samuel would "lie down and sleep in the temple at Shiloh before the Ark and receive the word of the Lord", and Joseph interpreted a Pharaoh's dream of seven lean cows swallowing seven fat cows as meaning the subsequent seven years would be bountiful, followed by seven years of famine. Most of the dreams in the Bible are in the Book of Genesis.

Buddhist

In Buddhism, ideas about dreams are similar to the classical and folk traditions in South Asia. The same dream is sometimes experienced by multiple people, as in the case of the Buddha-to-be, before he is leaving his home. It is described in the *Mahāvastu* that several of the Buddha's relatives had premonitory dreams preceding this. Some dreams are also seen to transcend time: the Buddha-to-be has certain dreams that are the same as those of previous Buddhas, the *Lalitavistara* states. In Buddhist literature, dreams often function as a "signpost" motif to mark certain stages in the life of the main character.

Buddhist views about dreams are expressed in the Pāli Commentaries and the Milinda Pañhā.



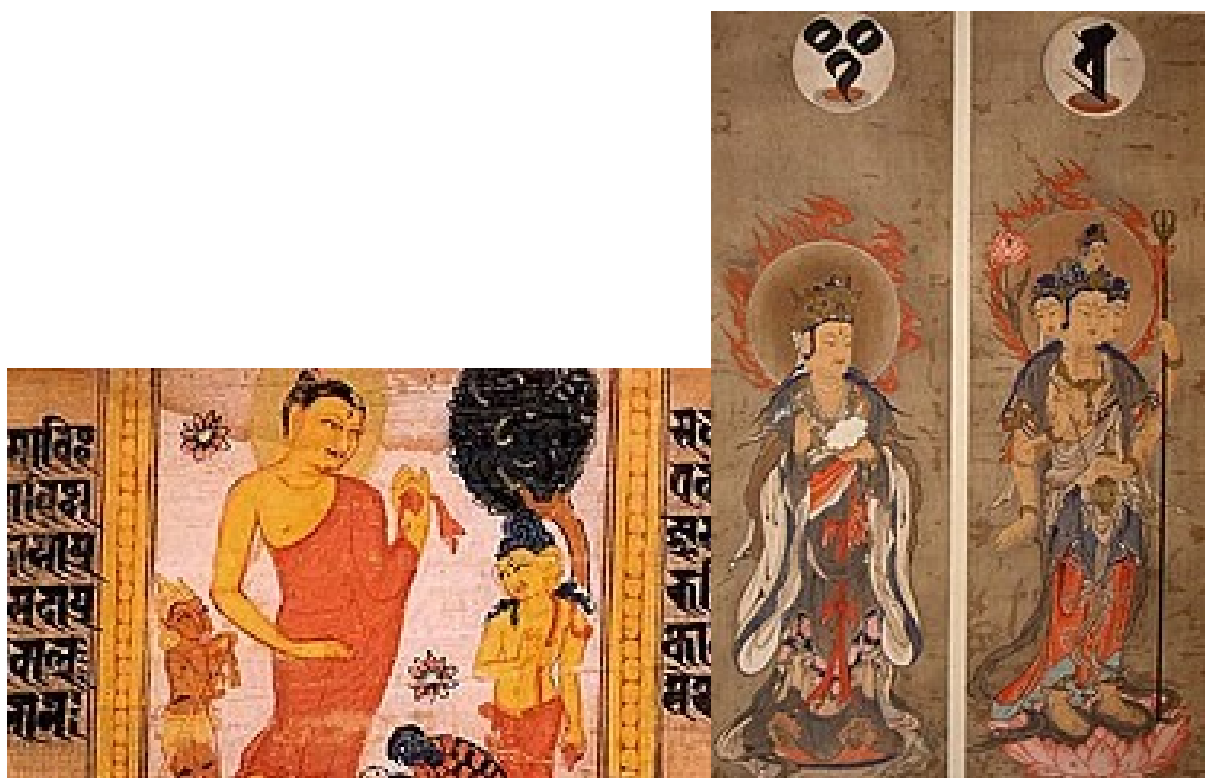
Dreaming of the Tiger Spring (虎梦泉) Statue at Hupao Spring (Hupaomengquan) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China

In Chinese history, people wrote of two vital aspects of the soul of which one is freed from the body during slumber to journey in a dream realm, while the other remained in the body.¹ This belief and dream interpretation had been questioned since early times, such as by the philosopher Wang Chong (27–97 CE).

The Babylonians and Assyrians divided dreams into "good," which were sent by the god

Nontheistic religions (not to be confused with atheism) are traditions of thought within a religious context—some otherwise aligned with theism, others not—in which nontheism informs religious beliefs or practices.^[1] Nontheism has been applied and plays significant roles in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. While many approaches to religion exclude nontheism by definition, some inclusive definitions of religion show how religious practice and belief do not depend on the presence of a god or gods. For example, Paul James and Peter Mandaville distinguish between religion and spirituality, but provide a definition of the term that avoids the usual reduction to "religions of the book":

Religion can be defined as a relatively-bounded system of beliefs, symbols and practices that addresses the nature of existence, and in which communion with others and Otherness is lived as if it both takes in and spiritually transcends socially-grounded ontologies of time, space, embodiment and knowing.^[2]



The Buddha descending from Trāyastriṃśa Heaven. Palm leaf manuscript. Nalanda, Bihar, India The gods Śakra (left) and Brahmā (right)

God in Buddhism

The Buddha said that *devas* (translated as "gods") do exist, but they were regarded as still being trapped in *samsara* and are not necessarily wiser than humans. In fact, the Buddha is often portrayed as a teacher of the gods,^[4] and superior to them.

Since the time of the Buddha, the denial of the existence of a creator deity has been seen as a key point in distinguishing Buddhist from non-Buddhist views. The question of an independent creator deity was answered by the Buddha in the Brahmajala Sutta. The Buddha denounced the view of a creator and sees that such notions are related to the false view of eternalism, and like the 61 other views, this belief causes suffering when one is attached to it and states these views may lead to desire, aversion and delusion. At the end of the Sutta the Buddha says he knows these 62 views and he also knows the truth that surpasses them. Later Buddhist philosophers also extensively criticized the idea of an eternal creator deity concerned with humanity.

Atheism in Hinduism

Hinduism is characterised by extremely diverse beliefs and practices. In the words of R.C. Zaehner, "it is perfectly possible to be a good Hindu whether one's personal views incline toward monism, monotheism, polytheism, or even atheism." He goes on to say that it is a religion that neither depends on the existence or non-existence of God or Gods. More broadly, Hinduism can be seen as having three more important strands: one featuring a personal Creator or Divine Being, second that emphasises an impersonal Absolute and a third that is pluralistic and non-absolute. The latter two traditions can be seen as nontheistic.

Although the Vedas are broadly concerned with the completion of ritual, there are some elements that can be interpreted as either nontheistic or precursors to the later developments of the nontheistic tradition. The oldest Hindu scripture, the Rig Veda mentions that 'There is only one god though the sages may give it various names' (1.164.46). Max Müller termed this henotheism, and it can be seen as indicating one, non-dual divine reality, with little emphasis on personality. The famous Nasadiya Sukta, the 129th Hymn of the tenth and final Mandala (or chapter) of the Rig Veda, considers creation and asks "The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. /Who then knows whence it has arisen?." This can be seen to contain the intuition that there must be a single principle behind all phenomena: 'That one' (tad ekam), self-sufficient, to which distinctions cannot be applied.

It is with the Upanishads, reckoned to be written in the first millennia (coeval with the ritualistic Brahmanas), that the Vedic emphasis on ritual was challenged. The Upanishads can be seen as the expression of new sources of power in India. Also, separate from the Upanishadic tradition were bands of wandering ascetics called Vadins whose largely nontheistic notions rejected the notion that religious knowledge was the property of the Brahmins. Many of these were shramanas, who represented a non-Vedic tradition rooted in India's pre-Aryan history. The emphasis of the Upanishads turned to knowledge, specifically the ultimate identity of all phenomena.^[20] This is expressed in the notion of Brahman, the key idea of the Upanishads, and much later philosophizing has been taken up with deciding whether Brahman is personal or impersonal. The understanding of the nature of Brahman as impersonal is based in the definition of it as 'ekam eva advitiyam' (Chandogya Upanishad 6.2.1) – it is one without a second and to which no substantive predicates can be attached. Further, both the Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads assert that the individual atman and the impersonal Brahman are one. The mahāvākya statement Tat Tvam Asi, found in the Chandogya Upanishad, can be taken to indicate this unity. The latter Upanishad uses the negative term Neti neti to 'describe' the divine.



Patañjali statue in Pantanjali Yog Peeth Haridwar

Classical Samkhya, Mimamsa, early Vaisheshika and early Nyaya schools of Hinduism do not accept the notion of an omnipotent creator God at all. The Bhagavad Gita, contains passages that bear a monistic reading and others that bear a theistic reading. Generally, the book as a whole has been interpreted by some who see it as containing a primarily nontheistic message, and by others who stress its theistic message. These broadly either follow after either Sankara or Ramanuja. An example of a nontheistic passage might be "The supreme Brahman is without any beginning. That is called neither being nor non-being," which Sankara interpreted to mean that Brahman can only be talked of in terms of negation of all attributes—'Neti neti'.

The Advaita Vedanta of Gaudapada and Sankara rejects theism as a consequence of its insistence that Brahman is "Without attributes, indivisible, subtle, inconceivable, and without blemish, Brahman is one and without a second. There is nothing other than He." This means that it

lacks properties usually associated with God such as omniscience, perfect goodness, omnipotence, and additionally is identical with the whole of reality, rather than being a causal agent or ruler of it.

God in Jainism

Jain texts claim that the universe consists of *jiva* (life force or souls) and *ajiva* (lifeless objects). According to Jain doctrine, the universe and its constituents – soul, matter, space, time, and principles of motion – have always existed. The universe and the matter and souls within it are eternal and uncreated, and there is no omnipotent creator god. Jainism offers an elaborate cosmology, including heavenly beings/*devas*, but these heavenly beings are not viewed as creators—they are subject to suffering and change like all other living beings, and are portrayed as mortal.

According to the Jain concept of divinity, any soul who destroys its *karmas* and desires, achieves liberation/Nirvana. A soul who destroys all its passions and desires has no desire to interfere in the working of the universe. If godliness is defined as the state of having freed one's soul from *karmas* and the attainment of enlightenment/Nirvana and a god as one who exists in such a state, then those who have achieved such a state can be termed gods (*Tirthankara*).

Besides scriptural authority, Jains also employ syllogism and deductive reasoning to refute creationist theories. Various views on divinity and the universe held by the Vedics, Sāmkhyas, Mimamsas, Buddhists, and other school of thoughts were criticized by Jain Ācāryas, such as Jinasena in Mahāpurāṇa.

In Jainism, godliness is said to be the inherent quality of every soul. This quality, however, is subdued by the soul's association with karmic matter. All souls who have achieved the natural state of infinite bliss, infinite knowledge (*kevala jnana*), infinite power and infinite perception are regarded as **God in Jainism**. Jainism rejects the idea of a creator deity responsible for the manifestation, creation, or maintenance of this universe. Instead, souls (in this case, *devis* or *devas*) who have reached Heaven for their merits and deeds influence the Universe for a fixed period until they undergo reincarnation and continue the cycle of enlightenment. According to Jain doctrine, the universe and its constituents (namely, soul, matter, space, time, and principles of motion) have always existed. All constituents and actions are governed by universal natural laws and "perfect soul" (an immaterial entity that cannot create or affect a material entity like the universe).

From the essential perspective, the soul of every living organism is perfect in every way, is independent of any actions of the organism, and is considered God or to have godliness. But the epithet of God is given to the soul in whom its properties manifest in accordance with its inherent nature. There are countably infinite souls in the universe.

According to *Ratnakaranda śrāvakācāra* (a major Jain text):^[2]

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In the nature of things the true God should be free from the faults and weaknesses of the lower nature; [he should be] the knower of all things and the revealer of dharma; in no other way can divinity be constituted..

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He alone who is free from hunger, thirst, senility, disease, birth, death, fear, pride, attachment, aversion, infatuation, worry, conceit, hatred, uneasiness, sweat, sleep and surprise is called a God.

In Jainism, godliness is said to be the inherent quality of every soul (or every living organism) characterizing infinite bliss, infinite power, *Kevala Jnana* (pure infinite knowledge),^[3] infinite perception, and perfect manifestations of (countably) infinite other attributes. There are two possible views after this point. One is to look at the soul from the perspective of the soul itself. This entails explanations of the properties of the soul, its exact structure, composition and nature, the nature of various states that arise from it and their source attributes as is done in the deep and arcane texts of Samayasāra, Niyamasara and Pravachanasara. Another view is to consider things apart from the soul and its relationships with the soul. According to this view, the qualities of a soul are subdued due to karmas of the soul. *Karmas* are the fundamental particles of nature in Jainism. One who achieves this state of soul through right belief, right knowledge and right conduct can be termed a god. This perfection of soul is called *Kevalin*. A god thus becomes a liberated soul - liberated of miseries, cycles of rebirth, world, *karmas* and finally liberated of body as well. This is called *nirvana* or *moksha*.

Jainism does not teach the dependency on any supreme being for enlightenment. The Tirthankara is a guide and teacher who points the way to enlightenment, but the struggle for enlightenment is one's own. Moral rewards and sufferings are not the work of a divine being, but a result of an innate moral order in the cosmos; a self-regulating mechanism whereby the individual reaps the fruits of his own actions through the workings of the karmas.

Jains believe that to attain enlightenment and ultimately liberation from all karmic bonding, one must practice the ethical principles not only in thought, but also in words (speech) and action. Such a practice through lifelong work towards oneself is regarded as observing the *Mahavrata* ("Great Vows").

Gods can be thus categorized into embodied gods also known as *arihantas* and non-embodied formless gods who are called *Siddhas*.

Jainism considers the *devīs* and *devas* to be souls who dwell in heavens owing to meritorious deeds in their past lives. These souls are in heavens for a fixed lifespan and even they have to undergo reincarnation as humans to achieve *moksha*.

Thus, there are infinite gods in Jainism, all equivalent, liberated, and infinite in the manifestation of all attributes. The Self and karmas are separate substances in Jainism, the former living and the latter non-living. The attainment of enlightenment and the one who exists in such a state, then those who have achieved such a state can be termed gods. Therefore, beings (Arihant) who've attained omniscience (*kevala jnana*) are worshipped as gods. The quality of godliness is one and the same in all of them. Jainism is sometimes regarded as a transtheistic religion,^[4] though it can be atheistic or polytheistic based on the way one defines "God".

Pañca-Parameṣṭhi- five supreme beings

Stella depicting *Pañca-Parameṣṭhi* (five supreme beings) worthy of veneration as per Jainism

In Jainism, the *Pañca-Parameṣṭhi* (Sanskrit for "five supreme beings") are a fivefold hierarchy of religious authorities worthy of veneration. The five supreme beings are:

1. *Arihant*
2. *Siddha*
3. *Acharya* (Head of the monastic order)
4. *Upadhyaya* ("Preceptor of less advanced ascetics")
5. *Muni* or *Jain monks*

Arihant (Jainism)

A human being who conquers all inner passions and possesses infinite right knowledge (*Kevala Jnana*) is revered as an *arihant* in Jainism.^[5] They are also called *Jinas* (conquerors) or *Kevalin* (omniscient beings). An arihant is a soul who has destroyed all passions, is totally unattached and without any desire and hence is able to destroy the four *ghātiyā karmas* and attain *kevala jñāna*, or omniscience. Such a soul still has a body and four *aghātiyā karmas*. *Arihantas*, at the end of their human lifespan, destroy all remaining *aghātiyā karmas* and attain Siddhahood. There are two kinds of *kevalin* or *arihant*.^[6]

- *Sāmānya Kevalin*-Ordinary victors, who are concerned with their own salvation.
- *Tirthankara Kevalin*-Twenty-four human spiritual guides (teaching gods), who show the true path to salvation.^[7]

Tirthankara



Although the *siddhas* (the liberated beings) are formless and without a body, this is how the Jain temples often depict them.// Image of Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24th and last Tirthankara (Photo:Samanar Hills)

The word *Tirthankara* signifies the founder of a *tirtha* which means a fordable passage across a sea. The *Tirthankara* show the "fordable path" across the sea of interminable births and deaths. Jain philosophy divides the wheel of time in two halves, *Utsarpiṇī* or ascending time cycle and *avasarpiṇī*, the descending time cycle. Exactly 24 *Tirthankara* are said to grace each half of the cosmic time cycle. Rishabhanatha was the first *Tirthankara* and Mahavira was the last *Tirthankara* of *avasarpiṇī*.

Tirthankara revive the fourfold order of *Shraman*, *Shramani*, *Śrāvaka*, and *Śrāvikā* called *sangha*. *Tirthankara* can be called teaching gods who teach the Jain philosophy. However it would be a mistake to regard the *tirthankara* as gods analogous to the gods of the Hindu pantheon despite the superficial resemblances between Jain and Hindu ways of worship. *Tirthankara*, being liberated, are beyond any kind of transactions with the rest of the universe. They are *not* the beings who exercise any sort of creative activity or who have the capacity or ability to intervene in answers to prayers.

Tirthankara-nama-karma is a special type of *karma*, bondage of which raises a soul to the supreme status of a *tirthankara*.

: *Siddha*

Ultimately all *arihantas* become *siddhas*, or liberated souls, at the time of their nirvana. A *siddha* is a soul who is permanently liberated from the transmigratory cycle of birth and death. Such a soul, having realized its true self, is free from all the *Karmas* and embodiment. They are formless and dwell in *Siddhashila* (the realm of the liberated beings) at the apex of the universe in infinite bliss, infinite perception, infinite knowledge and infinite energy.

The Acharanga Sutra 1.197 describes *siddhas* in this way:

The liberated soul is not long nor small nor round nor triangular nor quadrangular nor circular; it is not black nor blue nor red nor green nor white; neither of good nor bad smell; not bitter nor pungent nor astringent nor sweet; neither rough nor soft; neither heavy nor light; neither cold nor hot; neither harsh nor smooth; it is without body, without resurrection, without contact (of matter), it is not feminine nor masculine nor neuter. The siddha perceives and knows all, yet is beyond comparison. Its essence is without form; there is no condition of the unconditioned. It is not sound, not colour, not smell, not taste, not touch or anything of that kind. Thus I say.



Siddhashila as per

the Jain cosmology

Siddhahood is the ultimate goal of all souls. There are infinite souls who have become *siddhas* and infinite more who will attain this state of liberation. According to Jainism, Godhood is not a monopoly of some omnipotent and powerful being(s). All souls, with right perception, knowledge and conduct can achieve self-realisation and attain this state. Once achieving this state of infinite bliss and having destroyed all desires, the soul is not concerned with worldly matters and does not interfere in the working of the universe, as any activity or desire to interfere will once again result in influx of karmas and thus loss of liberation.

Jains pray to these passionless Gods not for any favors or rewards but rather pray to the qualities of the God with the objective of destroying the *karmas* and achieving the Godhood. This is best understood by the term *vandetadgunalabhdhaye* - i.e. "we pray to the attributes of such Gods to acquire such attributes"

According to Anne Vallely:

Jainism is not a religion of coming down. In Jainism it is we who must go up. We only have to help ourselves. In Jainism we have to become God. That is the only thing.

Deva (Jainism)

According to Digambar Terapanth, worship of such deities is considered as *mithyātvā* or wrong belief. However, in the Bispanthi Digambar tradition and the Shwetambar tradition, Padmavati is a popular Jain goddess.

Jain cosmology offers an elaborate description of heavenly beings (*devas*), but these beings are neither viewed as creators nor are they

immortal; they are subject to suffering and change like all other living beings, and must eventually die. In this way, they are similar to the devas of Buddhism. English-language material tends to retain the term "deva" or describe these beings as "deities", "gods" and "goddesses."



Idol of Padmāvati devī, śāsanadevī of Lord Parshvanatha at Walkeshwar Temple.

Jainism describes existence of *śāsanadevatās* and *śāsanadevīs*, the attendants of a *Tirthankara*, who create the *samavasarana* or the divine preaching assembly of a *Tirthankara*. Such heavenly beings are classified as:-

- *Bhavanapatis* – Devas dwelling in abodes
- *Vyantarās* – Intermediary devas
- *Jyotiṣkas* – Luminaries
- *Vaimānikas* – Astral devas

The souls on account of accumulation of meritorious *karmas* reincarnate in heavens as devas. Although their life span is quite long, after their merit *karmas* are exhausted, they once again have to reincarnate back into the realms of humans, animals or hells depending on their *karmas*. As these devas themselves are not liberated, they have attachments and passions and hence not worthy of worship.

Ācārya Hemachandra decries the worship of such devas:

These heavenly beings (devas above) tainted with attachment and passion; having women and weapons by their side, favour some and disfavour some; Such heavenly beings (devas) should not be worshipped by those who desire emancipation.

Worship of such devas is considered as *mithyatva* or wrong belief leading to bondage of karmas.

Jainism and non-creationism

Jain scriptures reject God as the creator of the universe. Further, it asserts that no god is responsible or causal for actions in the life of any living organism. Ācārya Hemacandra in the 12th century put forth the Jain view of the universe in the *Yogaśāstra*:

This universe is not created nor sustained by anyone; It is self-sustaining, without any base or support

Besides scriptural authority, Jains also resorted to syllogism and deductive reasoning to refute the creationist theories. Various views on divinity and the universe held by the Vedics, samkhyas, mīmāṃsās, Buddhists and other schools of thought were analyzed, debated and repudiated by various Jain Ācāryas. However, the most eloquent refutation of this view is provided by Ācārya Jinasena in Mahāpurāṇa, which was quoted by Carl Sagan in his 1980 book *Cosmos*.^[21]

Some foolish men declare that creator made the world. The doctrine that the world was created is ill advised and should be rejected.

If God created the world, where was he before the creation? If you say he was transcendent then and needed no support, where is he now? How could God have made this world without any raw material? If you say that he made this first, and then the world, you are faced with an endless regression.

If you declare that this raw material arose naturally you fall into another fallacy, for the whole universe might thus have been its own creator, and have arisen quite naturally.

If God created the world by an act of his own will, without any raw material, then it is just his will and nothing else — and who will believe this silly nonsense?

If he is ever perfect and complete, how could the will to create have arisen in him? If, on the other hand, he is not perfect, he could no more create the universe than a potter could.

If he is form-less, action-less and all-embracing, how could he have created the world? Such a soul, devoid of all modality, would have no desire to create anything.

If he is perfect, he does not strive for the three aims of man, so what advantage would he gain by creating the universe?

If you say that he created to no purpose because it was his nature to do so, then God is pointless. If he created in some kind of sport, it was the sport of a foolish child, leading to trouble.

If he created because of the karma of embodied beings (acquired in a previous creation), then he is not the Almighty Lord, but subordinate to something else.

If out of love for living beings and need of them he made the world, why did he not make creation wholly blissful free from misfortune?

If he were transcendent he would not create, for he would be free: Nor if involved in transmigration, for then he would not be almighty. Thus the doctrine that the world was created by God makes no sense at all.

And God commits great sin in slaying the children whom he himself created. If you say that he slays only to destroy evil beings, why did he create such beings in the first place?

Good men should combat the believer in divine creation, maddened by an evil doctrine. Know that the world is uncreated, as time itself is, without beginning or end, and is based on the principles, life and rest. Uncreated and indestructible, it endures under the compulsion of its own nature.

—*Mahapurana (Jainism) (The Great legend), Jainasena (India, ninth century)*



Queen Trishala, Mahavira's mother has 14 auspicious dreams. Folio 4 from Kalpasutra

Auspicious dreams are often described in texts of Jainism which forecast the virtue of children. Their number varies according to different traditions and they described frequently as **fourteen or sixteen dreams**. They are seen by mothers of the prominent figures in Jainism





including Tirthankaras, on the conception of their soul in the womb. They are interpreted as describing virtues and kingship of a future child. They are also found in various artistic media as an ornamentation.

Their number and description differ according to major traditions of Jainism. According to Digambara tradition, there are 16 dreams while according to Svetambara tradition, there are 14 dreams. Most of them are same. They are described in detail as dreams of queen Trishala, mother of Mahavira, in some Jain texts.^{[1][2][3][4][5][6][7]}

Auspicious dreams					
No. Digambara	No. Svetambara	Name	Image	Dream	Interpretation
1	1	Airavata		White elephant with four tusks, similar to the elephant of the god Indra	Mother would give birth to a child with good character. The four tusk of elephant depicts the four components of Sangha: monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.
2	2	Vrishabha		Bull	The dream foretold the birth of a great religious Teacher who would spread the light of



Auspicious dreams

No. Digambara	No. Svetambara	Name	Image	Dream	Interpretation
					knowledge ^[8]
3	3	Simha		Lion	Power, strength and fearlessness. The child will be strong as the lion, in overcoming all enemies.
4	4	Lakshmi		The goddess of wealth, Lakshmi or Shri	Wealth and prosperity
5	5	Phulmala		Pair of garlands	Popularity and respect
6	6	Chandra		Moon	Peace and help to others

Auspicious dreams					
No. Digambara	No. Svetambara	Name	Image	Dream	Interpretation
7	7	Surya		Sun	Supreme knowledge
-	8	Dhvaja		Flag with lion pictured on it flying on golden stick	Leadership
8	-	Meena-yugma		Pair of fishes	Handsome ness
9	9	Purna Kalasha		Full jug / pair of full vases with lotuses	Perfect in virtues and would be full of compassion for all living beings. The kalasha is considered auspicious in Dharmic religions.

Auspicious dreams

No. Digambara	No. Svetambara	Name	Image	Dream	Interpretation
10	10	Padma Sarovar		Lotus pond / celestial lake	Detachment from worldly possessions
11	11	Ratnakar		Ocean / rough ocean	Achievement of infinite perception and knowledge, spiritual liberation
12	12	Simhasana		Large, resplendent, golden throne set with bright diamonds and rubies	Son will become the World Teacher
13	12	Deva-Vimana		Celestial cheriot palace	Angels in heaven would respect, honor his spiritual teachings
14	-	Palace		The rising residence of <i>Nāgendra</i> , the lord of the devas of	Child will be born with clairvoyance

Auspicious dreams					
No. Digambara	No. Svetambara	Name	Image	Dream	Interpretation
				the <i>Nāgakumāra</i> clan ^[8]	
15	13	Ratnadhag		Heap of jewels	Virtues and wisdom
16	14	Nirdhuma Agni		Smokeless fire	Reform and restoration of religious order. He would burn his karmas and attain salvation.

These dreams features animals, objects and a goddess associated with positive virtues and kingship. They are generally considered positive symbols in Indian culture so they frequently appear in other Indian religions like Buddhism and Hinduism



Sixteen Auspicious Dreams in Jainism

In texts

These dreams are connected with the births of Tirthankaras and the other prominent people including *Chakravarti*, *Balabhadra/Baladeva* and *Vāsudeva* in Jainism. They are 63 in total and called *Shalakupurusha*. Their mothers see a certain number of dreams on conception of their soul in womb. They are described in the great detail in Kalpasutra. 12th century Jain monk Hemchandracharya described and interpreted them in detail in *Trishashthishalakapurush. Avashyak-niryukti*, an early verse-commentary in Prakrit, explains relation of names of some Tirthankaras and these dreams.

Foretelling as per *Kalpasutra*

Number of dreams	What it foretells
14 dreams	birth of a future <i>Tirthankara</i> or <i>Chakravarti</i> (universal monarch)
7 of the 14 dreams	birth of a future Vāsudeva
4 of the 14 dreams	birth of a future Baladeva/Balabhadra
1 of the 14 dreams	birth of a future Mandalika (king)

Festivals

On the fifth day of festival of Paryusana, Jain monks read or narrate the portion of the *Kalpasutra* dealing with birth of last *Tirthankara Mahavira*, to the Jain lay people. They are displayed to the people in the form of silver models and auctioned for temporary possession and display to other people for festive days.



Auspicious dreams as an ornamentation on cover of 19th-century manuscript

HINDUISM

Extracts from Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa

Auspicious dreams

Nanda asked :

1. Tell me, O Lord, which sort of dreams gives happiness and merit to the seer and produces good results.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied :

2-3. My father! The Sāmaveda is regarded an authority in all matters. Now, please listen to me discussing the auspicious dreams that always give meritorious results, as described in the Puṇya Kāṇḍa of Kanva recension of the Sāmaveda.

4. Man attains the merit of a dip in the holy Ganges if he hears the description of dreams that yield various pious results.

5-6. Dreams of the first quarter (Yama or Prahara) of the night show results in a year, of the second quarter in eight months, of the third in three months, of the fourth in a fortnight, of the dawn in ten days. Dreams of early morning meet immediate results if the seer wakes up after the dream.

7. A dream dreamt by a person mentally anxious or physically sick, becomes futile.

8. Dreams seen by a man sick, frightened, naked, with disheveled hair or smeared with excreta, become futile.

9. A dream becomes futile if the dreamer falls asleep again after the dream or due to his utter foolishness discloses it to some body else during the same night.

10. The disclosure of his dream to one hailing from Kaśyapa clan brings about danger, that of his dream to one distressed, distress and that of his dream to a vile person, disease to the dreamer.

11-12. (He) contracts fright by disclosing the dream to an enemy, quarrel by doing it to a fool (or an illiterate person), loss of wealth by doing the same to a woman; he gets into fear from thieves if he discloses it at night, bereavement if, while drowsy, but attains desired object if he discloses the dream to a learned man. But, O Nanda,

dreams though good should not be disclosed to a person who belongs to the Kaśyapa lineage even if he is learned.

13-14. A man receives wealth if he (in his dream) rides an ox, an elephant or a horse, or climbs up a tree or a mountain or eats or wails. He gets filed rich in harvest if he receives a lyre (VINA) in dream.

15. He gets wealth if he is injured with weapons or smeared with excrement or blood or suffers from boils or biting of worms.

15. He gets wealth if he is injured with weapons or smeared with excrement or blood or suffers from boils or biting of worms.

16-17. He receives favourable news and immense wealth if he performs the following in dream: viz. incest, wedding, drinking of semen mixed with urine, entering a city (at night) or hell and drinking of blood mixed with urine or nectar.

18-20. Fame and vast wealth will be attained by one who sees in dream the following : an elephant, a king, gold, an ox, a cow, a lamp, food, fruits, flowers, a maiden, an umbrella, a chariot, a flat, or his relatives. He gets fortune if he sees (in a dream) a pitcher full of water, a twice born person (i.e., a Brāhmaṇa, a kṣatriya or a vaiśya), fire, flowers, betel, a temple, white, Paddy, a dagger or a public woman. He also gets merit and wealth if he sees (in a dream) cow milk or clarified butter (ghṛta)

21. He will definitely become a king if he enjoys curd, milk, ghee, honey, sweets or sunned rice from a leaf of lotus plant in dream.

22. A man will attain desired objects, receive pleasant news and much money if he partakes of meat of birds of human beings in dreams.

23. He will get the same results (as described in the preceding verse) he if walks along a road with an umbrella or a pair of shoes or a sharp edged sword, in his dream.

24. One becomes very prominent if he swims with the help of a raft in dream and the dreaming of a tree bearing fruits leads one to attainment of wealth.

25. One who is bitten by a white snake in his right hand (in dream) gets very soon a modest and sweet-tongued wife.

26. Dream of a mare, a hen, a female curlew gives a wife and that of being chained gives good renown.

27. One attains wealth if he sees himself to be bitten by a snake in dream and gets rid of diseases if he sees the sun or the moon in his dream.

28. He who partakes in dream rice with curd or porridge from withered leaf of the lotus plant on the bank of a river or a lack becomes a king.

29. He, who sees (in dream) a leech, a scorpion, or a snake, gets wealth, a son, victory and renown.

30. He, who is injured in dream by horned or fanged animals, boars or monkeys, definitely becomes a king and gets vast wealth.

31. One gets vast wealth by seeing, in dream, fish meat, pearl, conch-shell, sandal or diamond.

32. Wealth is obtained as a result of seeing in dream, wine, blood, gold and excrement and victory is achieved by seeing an image or a symbolic representation of Siva (Siva linga)

33. One, who sees in dream a mango or a marmelos tree bearing flowers and fruits, gets wealth. He also gets wealth, intellect and prosperity if he sees burning flames in a dream.
34. Wealth is obtained by seeing the fruit of Amalaki or haritaki (embolic myrobalan) and lotus flower in a dream. A man gets whatever he sees in a dream offered to him by deities, Brāhmaṇas, cows, the manes or monks.
35. One attains prosperity and happiness by embracing, in a dream a woman wearing white clothes and white garlands and white unguents.
36. He, who embraces a woman clothed and garlanded in yellow, attains prosperity and happiness. (welfare.)
37. The dreaming of all white objects excepting ashes, bones and cotton is auspicious; while that of black objects excepting a cow, an elephant, a deity and a Brāhmaṇa is inauspicious.
38. One, who finds in a dream a celestial woman or a Brāhmaṇa lady with a smiling face and jewelry on to enter into his apartment gets good friends.
39. Goddess Durgā herself is pleased with him who enjoys in dream the pleasure of a Brāhmaṇa, a Brāhmaṇa lady, a deity, a celestial maiden, a girl of eight wearing ornaments studded with jewels.
40. He, to whom a pleased Brāhmaṇa or a smiling Brāhmaṇa lady offers in dream a fruit, gets a male-child.
41. O Nanda ! He, who is blessed by a Brāhmaṇa in dream, gets the results of that blessing and definitely obtains riches.
- 42-43. One, who sees (in dream) a contented Brāhmaṇa entering his house, is blessed with the entrance of Nārāyaṇa, Siva and Brahma to his house and obtains vast property, renown and welfare, he also gathers bliss, name and fame at every step.
44. If one chances to get Surabhi in dream, he obtains landed property and a devoted wife.
45. It is ascertained in the Vedas that one who is lifted by an elephant with its trunk and placed on its own head, becomes a king.
46. O Nanda ! he, whom a pleased Brāhmaṇa embraces in dream, no doubt, becomes pious and fortunate.
47. The virtuous man, who receives an offer of flowers from a Brāhmaṇa in dream, becomes victorious, renowned, rich and happy.
48. Seeing sacred places, palatial buildings, jewels and houses in dream, a man becomes victorious, rich and fortunate to have bathing in holy places.
49. He, who gives in dream a pitcher filled with water to any body, gets a male-child and property.
50. He, who finds in dream a handsome lady entering his house taking measuring vessels and Kudava and Adhaka gets riches.
51. O Nanda ! he, to whose house a celestial woman comes and relieves herself, receives wealth and gets rid of poverty.

52. He, who sees in dream Sambhu with Parvati or Narayana with Laksmi or a Brāhmaṇa with his wife, entering his house (attains prosperity in every sphere of life).
53. He, to whom a Brāhmaṇa or a Brāhmaṇa lady offers paddy or a handful of flowers, gets prosperity in every sphere.
54. He, who receives a sting of pearls, a garland (of flowers), Sandal wood (in dream), O Nanda, from the hands of a Brāhmaṇa, gets, wealth and becomes happy in every respect.
55. He, who receives yellow ochre, flag, turmeric, sugar-cane and boiled rice in dream, obtain all-round prosperity.
56. He, on whose head, a Brāhmaṇa or a Brāhmaṇa lady holds an umbrella or scatters white paddy in dream, will become a king.
57. If a person in white garland and in white unguents in dream partakes curd and porridge (rice boiled in milk) on a chariot, he becomes a king.
58. He, to whom, a Brāhmaṇa or a Brāhmaṇa lady offers nectar, curd or an award in dream will without fail become a king or attain kingly prosperity.
59. That virtuous man, to whom a Brāhmaṇa gives a book in dream, becomes a world-renowned great poet and vastly learned man.
60. If a woman teaches some body in dream just like a mother, then the taught becomes a peerless scholar like the son of goddess Sarsvati herself.
61. If a Brāhmaṇa teaches somebody in a dream with paternal care, and gives him a book, with affection in dream, the latter becomes similar to the former (i.e. in respect of learning)
62. One who gets a book on the way or anywhere else in dream, becomes learned, renowned and famous in the world.
63. One, who receives initiation with Mahāmantra from a Brāhmaṇa or a Brāhmaṇa lady becomes wise, wealthy, accomplished and intelligent.
64. One to whom a Brāhmaṇa offers an incantation or a stone image of some god, gains saintly attainment (siddhi) in the same.
65. He, who in dream bows down to multitude of Brāhmaṇas and Brāhmaṇa ladies and receives their blessings, becomes an emperor or a learned poet.
66. He, to whom a contended Brāhmaṇa makes a gift of a piece of land with white paddy in dream, becomes the lord of the earth.
67. If a Brāhmaṇa takes some body in a chariot and shows him different strata of heaven in dream, the seer gets an enhanced life and wealth.
68. If a Brāhmaṇa or a Brāhmaṇa lady being pleased, gives a daughter to any body (in marriage in dream) the recipient becomes king with fabulous riches.
69. One attains prosperity by seeing in dream a lake, a sea, a river, a white snake or a white mountain.
70. One attains long life, by seeing in a dream, a dead body, becomes, free from malady by seeing in a dream a diseased person, becomes happy at the sight of a happy man.

71. He, who dreams that a heavenly or beautiful woman is telling him, "Please be my husband," and does not fall asleep again after this dream, becomes a king without fail.

72. A man attains renown by seeing in dream, a girl, a string of crystal beads, a rainbow and white clouds.

73. He, whom a Brāhmaṇa tells in dream, "Be my servant", becomes a devotee of Lord Vishnu, having attained perfect devotion.

74-75 Wise men who know the secret of dreams say that dreaming a Brāhmaṇa lady, Lakshmi, Durgā, Sarasvatī, Rādhikā, in the guise of a cow-girl, a boy in the guise of cow-herd is auspicious.

76. O Nanda ! I have described the auspicious and meritorious dreams to you. If you are to know more about dreams I shall described more for your information.

INAUSPICIOUS DREAMS

1. A dream becomes futile if the dreamer sleeps again after it. Hence, one should sleep again if one has a bad dream.

2. Nanda said, "O Lord" ! I have listened to your description of good dreams, now please tell me about the bad ones. Then the Lord said unto him,, "Now you hear the same".

3. The Lord said, "If anybody in dream bursts into a jovial laughter, witnesses marriage, dance, music or sees his tutelary deity, he is certainly in danger."

4. He, who in dream, gnashes his teeth or sees some body wandering, suffers loss of health, or falls a victim to physical diseases.

5. Death is certain to him who anointed with oil travels in dream towards the southern direction, on the back of a mule, or a camel or a buffalo.

6. One has to experience great difficulties if he sees in dream, lime, china-rose, asoka, oleander flower, oil and salt.

7. He, who sees in dream a naked, dark-complexioned sudra widow, with nose cut off, or a kapardaka (small shell called cowrie) or a palm fruit, comes to grief (aspirations are dashed).

8. Seeing an angry Brāhmaṇa or an angry Brāhmaṇa lady in dream one becomes endangered and the goddess of fortune is sure to quit his house.

9. One gets sorrow by seeing in dream a wild flower, a red flower, a palasa tree in blossom, cotton or white cloth.

10. Dreams of a woman singing, laughing and clad in black or a widow of dark complexion are fatal to the dreamer.

11. The dwelling land of a person who dreams gods dancing, singing, laughing and making flapping sounds with their arms (in challenge) or running, is destroyed.

12. One lives only for ten months after the dream of one's eating vomited matters, urine, excrements, brass, silver or gold.

13. His death is impending to him who embraces a woman in black cloth, garlands and toilets, in dream.

14. His death also is impending, who gets in a dream, a dead child, the head, or a string of human bones of a king or any one else.
14. To see in dream human bones leads to various affections and dangers according to Western interpreters.
15. Ailment is impending to him who finds himself anointed with ghee (clarified butter), milk, honey, butter milk or molasses.
16. His death too is impending, who awakes from a dream after getting alone in a chariot drawn by mules or camels.
17. Maladies are sure to befall him who embraces in dream a woman in red clothes, garlands and toilets.
18. He, who dreams of cut-off hair and nails, extinguished charcoal, or a funeral pile full of ashes, dies very soon.
19. Distress positively comes to him who dreams of cremation ground, dry wood, grass, iron and blackish ink.
20. He, who finds in dream sole of a wooden sandal, dreadfully red garland, grains of bean (masa), lentil (masura) and kidney beans (mudga) suffers from immediate eruption of boils.
21. Ailments are sure to him who dreams of thorns, vultures, crows, bears, monkeys, mules or pus and dirt of human body.
- 22-23. One suffers from calamities as a result of seeing in dream, a broken vessel, a wound, a sudra, a patient suffering from ulceros proriasis, a piece of red cloth, a person with matted hair, a lion, a pig, a buffalo, deep darkness, an awful car crash and male or female organ.
24. Death is impending on him, who finds in dream an ugly looking and shabbily clad 'mleccha' or a messenger of Yama (the king of the dead) hold a pasa weapon in his hand.
25. A person finds himself in distress as a result of receiving farewell in dream from an angry Brāhmaṇa or Brāhmaṇa lady, boy or girl, son or daughter.
26. Death is sure to him, who sees in dream, black flowers, a garland of black flowers, an armed soldier and an ugly looking mleccha woman.
27. One, who sees in dream playing on various musical instruments, dancing, singing, a musician clad in red, a jovial beating of 'mṛdaṅga' surely experiences sorrows.
28. A dreamer of the dead body of a dead person dies. Brother's death happens to him, who catches fish or the like, in dream.
29. Death is the result of a dream of a spirit assuming a beheaded body, a person with indecently disheveled hair or one dancing rapidly.
30. His days are numbered, who is embraced in a dream by a dead male or female, or a dreadful mleccha with dark complexion.
31. One suffers from financial loss or gets physical diseases as a result of losing teeth or hair in dream.
32. Troubles from the king befall him, who is, in dream, chased by a horned or fanged animal or by boys or men.

33. Sorrow befalls a man, as a result of a dream of a tree cut-down or about to fall, hail, husk, a razor, red hot cinder or a shower of ashes.
34. Sorrow befalls him too, who witnesses in dream the fall of a house or a mountain, a dreadful comet or the broken trunk of a tree.
35. Distress is sure to him who finds himself, in dream, falling from a chariot, a house, a mountain, a tree, a cow, an elephant, a house or a mule.
36. Death is inevitable to come to those who in dream fall from a height into a funeral pile full of ashes and cinder, or a pit filled with salt (or fuller's earth) or on a heap of lime.
37. He, from whose head an umbrella is forcibly removed by a rogue in dream, suffers the death of his father, or preceptor or king.
38. Laksmi, the goddess of fortune, leaves him, who finds, in dream, Surabhi leaving his house along with her calf, being frightened.
39. Death is inevitable to him who finds himself to be carried away being tied with ropes, by the messengers of Yama, (the king of the Hades) or by foreigners.
40. He, who is angrily cursed, in a dream by an astrologer, a Brāhmaṇa lady or his spiritual guide, will certainly be endangered.
41. Death is inevitable to him also on whose body falls in dream a crow, a dog, or a bear with a motive to harm him.
42. He, who is chased, in dream, by angry buffaloes, bears, camels, hogs, or donkeys, will surely fall ill.

BUDDHISM---MAHA MAYA'S DREAM



Buddhis

t Mata (Mother) Mahamays dream.



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Mahamaya musing at her dream//King Suddhodana and Mahamaya analysing the dream

Queen Maha Maya's Dream

More than 2,500 years ago, there was a king called Suddhodana. He married a beautiful Koliyan princess named Maha Maya. The couple ruled over the Sakyas, a warrior tribe living next to the Koliya tribe, in the north of India, in what is now known as Nepal. The capital of the Sakya country was laid out across the foothills of the Himalayas and called Kapilavatthu.

Queen Maha Maya was the daughter of King Anjana of the Koliyas. Such was her beauty that the name Maya, meaning "vision" was given to her. But it was Maya's virtues and talents that were her most wonderful qualities, for she was endowed with the highest gifts of intelligence and piety. King Suddhodana was indeed worthy of his lovely wife. He himself was called "King of the Law" because he ruled according to the law. There was no other man among the Sakyas more honored and respected. The king was admired by his nobles and courtiers, as well as by the householders and merchants. Such was the noble family from which the Buddha was to arise.

One full moon night, sleeping in the palace, the queen had a vivid dream. She felt herself being carried away by four devas (spirits) to Lake Anotatta in the Himalayas. After bathing her in the lake, the devas clothed her in heavenly cloths, anointed her with perfumes, and bedecked her with divine flowers. Soon after a white elephant, holding a white lotus flower in its trunk, appeared and went round her three times, entering her womb through her right side. Finally the elephant disappeared and the queen awoke, knowing she had been delivered an important message, as the elephant is a symbol of greatness in Nepal. The next day, early in the morning, the queen told the king about the dream. The king was puzzled and sent for some wise men to discover the meaning of the dream.

The wise men said, "Your Majesty, you are very lucky. The devas have chosen our queen as the mother of the Purest-One and the child will become a very great being." The king and queen were very happy when they heard this.

They were so pleased that they invited many of the noblemen in the country to the palace to a feast to tell them the good news. Even the needy were not forgotten.

Food and clothes were given to the poor people in celebration. The whole kingdom waited eagerly for the birth of the new prince, and Queen Maya enjoyed a happy and healthy pregnancy, living a pure life for herself and her unborn child.

Mahamaya possessed every virtue of being the mother of the Buddha. She never violated the practice of panchasheela (five vows of righteous conduct, which means refraining from killing; stealing; sensual pursuits, lies and intoxicants). Further, according to the tradition she had practised parami for one thousand years; and was thus suitable to become the mother of the Buddha.

The day when the Buddha was to be conceived she kept fast; and at night she had a dream. In her dream she saw that the four devas, called the Chatumaharajas, took her to the Himava and placed her on a bed under a Sal tree. Then the wives of the devas came and bathed her in the Lake Anottata and dressed her in divine robes. They then took her to a golden palace and laid her in a magnificent couch, where the Bodhisatta in the form of a white elephant holding a white lotus in his resplendent trunk entered her womb through her right side. That was a full-moon day of Uttara Asalha to mark the beginning of a seven-day festival. She, too, had participated in the festival. Furthermore, on that day she did not sleep with her husband.

Next day, she told the dream to the king, who in turn consulted the court astrologers, and from them heard the prophecy that the child would either be universal monarch or a Buddha. A Buddha is one who has attained Bodhi; and by Bodhi is meant wisdom, an ideal state of intellectual and ethical perfection which can be achieved by man through purely human means. *The term Buddha literally means enlightened one, a knower.*

Metaphysical questions

On one occasion, when presented with a problem of metaphysics by the monk Malunkya-putta, the Buddha responded with the Parable of the Poisoned Arrow. When a man is shot with an arrow thickly smeared with poison, his family summons a doctor to have the poison removed, and the doctor gives an antidote.

But the man refuses to let the doctor do anything before certain questions can be answered. The wounded man demands to know who shot the arrow, what his caste and job is, and why he shot him. He wants to know what kind of bow the man used and how he acquired the ingredients used in preparing the poison. Malunkya-putta, such a man will die before getting the answers to his questions. It is no different for one

who follows the Way. I teach only those things necessary to realize the Way. Things which are not helpful or necessary, I do not teach.



This relief scene from around 100 to 300 depicts the dream of Maya, the mother of the historical Buddha. Queen Maya is asleep in her palace under a full moon. An attendant stands guard outside. In her dream, a white elephant enters her side. This is a miraculous conception that results in the birth of the future Buddha. This scene, along with others from the life of the Buddha, would have been recognizable to viewers at the time it was made, as the scenes from the life of Christ on the walls of a cathedral would have been familiar to medieval European viewers.

The Dream of Queen Maya (the Buddha's Conception)/Ancient Gandhara region- 2nd century

Female attendants and guards, one of whom holds a sword, surround Maya, who is sleeping on a bed that has turned legs and is covered with an elegant floral textile. Maya dreams of a six-tusked elephant that descends from heaven to enter her womb through her right side; originally a small elephant would have been depicted in the broken central disk. This miraculous conception marks the Buddha Shakyamuni's final rebirth and physical entrance into this world.

